DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 245 421 EC 162 484

AUTHOR	Cohen, Shirley; And Others
TITLE	Mental Retardation and Learning Disabilities: Accepting Individual Differences [and] Amy Can Learn.
INSTITUTION	City Univ. of New York, N.Y. Hunter Coll. Special Education Development Center.
REPORT NO	NYSED-82-7294; NYSED-82-7299
PUB DATE	Sep 82
NOTE	68p.; Includes instructional flip book "Amy Can Learn!" which is largely photographs and may not reproduce well. Reprint. Document originally available from Developmental Learning Materials (1977). For related documents and workbooks (flipbooks), see EC 162 481-485.
AVAILABLE FROM	New York State Education Department, Publications Sales Desk, Room 164EBA, Albany, NY 12234 (kit price $6.50, prepaid; 5 manuals, 4 student workbooks, 1 cassette).
PUB TYPE	Guides - Classroom Use - Guides (For Teachers) (052) -- Guides - Classroom Use - Materials (For Learner) (051)
EDRS PRICE	MF01/PC03 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS	*Attitude Change; Class Activities; Curriculum Guides; Elementary Education; *Learning Disabilities; *Lesson Plans; *Mainstreaming; *Mental Retardation; Peer Acceptance; Primary Education; Resources; Teaching Methods

ABSTRACT

The AID (Accepting Individual Differences) curriculum guide, the fourth in a series of five manuals that attempt to foster acceptance and respect for differences as exemplified by disabilities, presents activities on the topics of mental retardation (MR) and learning disabilities (LD) for instructors, and lesson plans to be used with primary grade children. Suggestions are made for personal learning by instructors through simulation activities, reading, observation of a conference with a teacher of MR students, and use of resources. Activities relevant to MR for primary students are presented in three lesson plans on the theme, "Some students learn more slowly than others." The lesson plans, which incorporate use of the accompanying student workbook, "Amy Can Learn," are presented by theme, specific objective, activities (such as telling about hard and easy learning experiences), literature for students, a discussion guide, directions for presenting the activity, problem solving, or story time. Noted are seven activities to be used with more advanced students including reading, problem solving, and planning a project for the class to share with MR students. The section on LD also contains basic information about the handicap and suggested learning experiences for the instructor. Described are eight activities including simulating what it is like to be learning disabled. Listed in the curriculum materials and reference section are approximately nine books and three sources of free materials on the topic of mental retardation; and five books or articles, and one source of free materials on learning disabilities. (MC)

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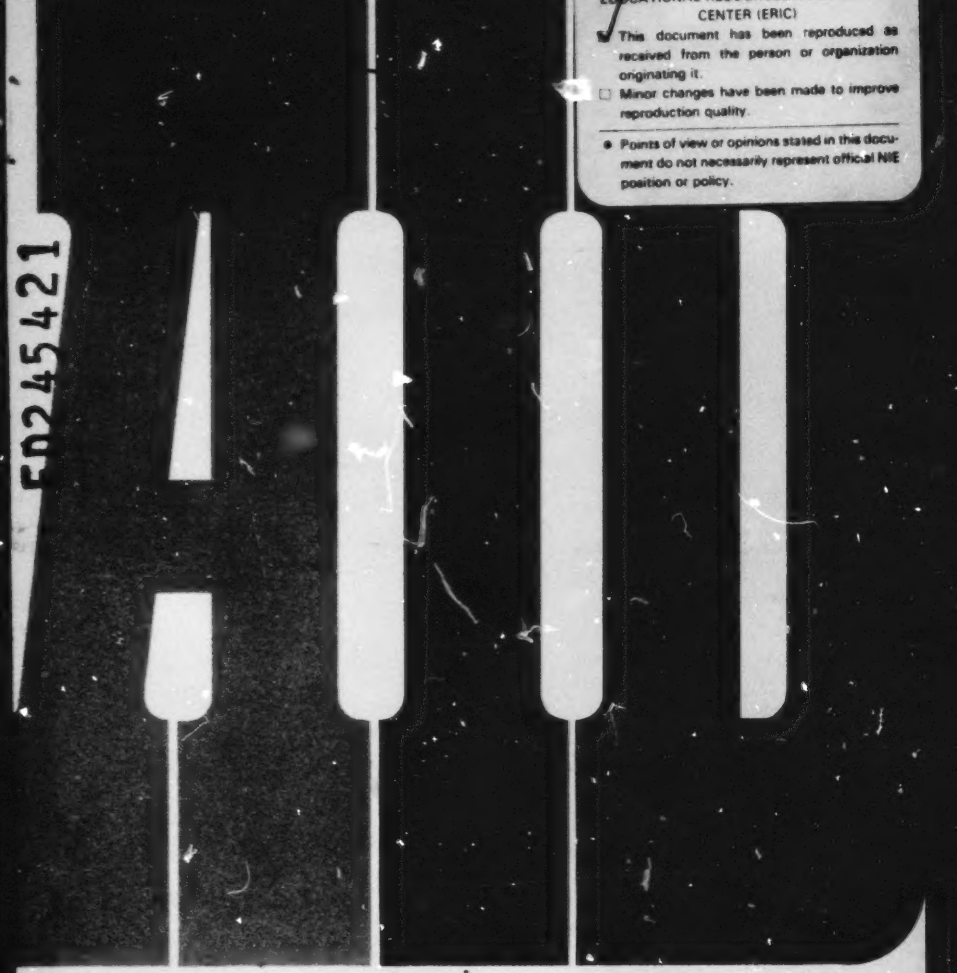

Mental Retardation and Learning Disabilities

EC 162 484

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Mental Retardation and Learning Disabilities

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THE STATE EDUCATION DEPARTMENT
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Acknowledgments

We wish to thank the Yonkers City School System and in particular Joan Malanga, Coordinator of Special Education, for assistance in the development of this curriculum.

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BASIC INFORMATION ABOUT MENTAL RETARDATION

Approximately 3 percent of the population of the United States—over 6 million people—may be classified as mentally retarded. The most recent definition of mental retardation adopted by the American Association on Mental Deficiency is: "Significantly subaverage general intellectual functioning existing concurrently with deficits in adaptive behavior, and manifested during the developmental period."* Degrees of retardation range from mild to profound.

Mildly retarded individuals differ from their peers primarily in the rate and degree of their intellectual development and account for approximately 89% of the retarded population. Mild mental retardation is thought to be environmentally induced in many cases, and it may not become apparent until a child enters school. In adulthood that person may again lose his identity as mentally retarded because he is often able to attain economic and social self-sufficiency.

Moderately retarded people can learn to take care of their personal needs, carry out many household duties, and perform simple vocational tasks in sheltered workshops. The *severely* retarded can be trained in basic self-care, while the *profoundly* retarded are largely dependent upon others. Increasingly the needs of moderately and severely retarded individuals are being met in their own communities.

Twenty-five percent of the time there is a known biomedical cause for mental retardation. Down's Syndrome (mongolism) is probably the most familiar form of biomedically-based mental retardation. Although many individuals with Down's Syndrome are moderately to severely retarded, some are only mildly retarded. They can learn to read, write, spell, and do basic computational arithmetic.

Sources used in this section include: The President's Committee on Mental Retardation, *MR72, Islands of Excellence* (DHEW Publication No. [05] 73-7) and *Facts on Mental Retardation,* National Association for Retarded Citizens, Publication #10-4 (Arlington, Tex.: 1974).

*Adaptive behavior refers to the way an individual performs those tasks expected of someone his age in his culture.

Students in public-school classes for "the educable mentally retarded" are usually only mildly retarded. Those in public-school classes for "the trainable mentally retarded" may be moderately or severely impaired.

LEARNING EXPERIENCES

1. Simulation

What does it feel like to be mentally retarded?

Try to learn something that you don't have an adequate background to really understand:

- Borrow a book on advanced mathematics from the library. Make sure it contains problems that the reader is supposed to solve. Read a section of the book and try to solve the problems at the end of it.
- Borrow a language-instruction record for a foreign language with which you are completely unfamiliar. Start the record at the sixth lesson and try to keep up with it.
- Obtain a novel written in a foreign language that you know only slightly. Read one chapter of the book and try to grasp its meaning.

2. Reading

What is it like to be mentally retarded?

Hunt, N. *The World of Nigel Hunt: The Diary of a Mongoloid Youth.* New York: Garrett, 1967.

or

Hurwitz, H. L. *Donald: The Man Who Remains a Boy.* New York: Simon & Schuster, 1973.

3. Observation

How do mentally retarded students learn?

If there is a class for the mentally retarded in your school, arrange to visit it. Pay attention to:

- Curriculum content and learning activities
- Instructional techniques
- Social interaction of students

4. Conference

Make an appointment to meet briefly with the teacher of the students you observed. He or she may help you better understand some of what took place.

5. Resources

For written information, contact:

National Association for Retarded Citizens
2709 Avenue E East
Arlington, Tex. 76011

The President's Committee on Mental Retardation
Washington, D.C. 20201

For information about local resources, contact the state or local chapter of the National Association for Retarded Citizens.

BASIC CONCEPTS

- People vary widely in the rates at which they learn. Some students learn more slowly than others (the specific theme of Lessons 1-3).
- People who need extra time and extra help to learn, and who can't learn some of the more difficult tasks that most of the students their age can, are sometimes called *mentally retarded.*
- Most mentally retarded individuals look the same as anyone else, but some have selected physical characteristics that are different in minor ways from other people's.
- Mental retardation is not a "bad name." It does *not* mean that a person cannot learn. It is *not* something to be made fun of or to be ashamed of.

GOALS

- To increase understanding of mental retardation.
- To decrease derogatory behavior toward retarded students.
- To increase positive interactions between retarded and non-retarded students.

Note: To allow greater flexibility, the Activities for More Advanced Students (pp. 14-17) have not been organized into a series of discrete lessons. For general guidelines on the use of these activities, see pp. 9-10 in *AID: Overview.*

LESSON 1

Theme	Some students learn more slowly than others.
Specific Objective	To help students understand what mental retardation is and is not.
Activity	Hard and Easy
Literature for Students	Green, M. *Is It Hard? Is It Easy?* Reading, Mass. Addison-Wesley, 1960. (or any other book that illustrates individual differences in the acquisition of skills)

DISCUSSION GUIDE

Instructor Introduction	We'll talk about ways people are the same and ways they are different. One way people are the same is that all people learn. But all don't learn the same things at the same time. Some things are harder for some people than for others. Some things are easier for some people than for others. "Can anyone here ride a two-wheeler bicycle?"
Student Responses	Affirmative responses will vary with grade level.
Instructor	"Some students learn to ride bicycles quickly; others take longer. But most students who practice long enough do learn to ride bicycles. "How many students can write their last names?" (Or ask how many can write their addresses, write cursively, or do something that most students don't master until the next grade level.)
Student Responses	Very few students respond affirmatively.
Instructor	"That's hard for most of you, but next year most of you will be able to do it. Your teacher will help you learn how to do it. Maybe your mother or father will

help you. They will show you how, and you will practice. Then you will be able to do it."

STORY TIME

Instructor "I'm going to read you a book now about 'hard' and 'easy.' Then we'll talk more about things that are hard and how you learn to do them."

Read the book *Is It Hard? Is It Easy?*

HARD AND EASY

Ask individual students to tell you things that they can't do yet but are trying to learn. (You may want to list them on the board.) Then ask for things that used to be hard for them to do, but which they have recently mastered. Finally, ask for things that are easy for them to do.

Instructor "There are many things that you still have to learn, but you have already learned many, many things. [You can name things from the third list and add others.] Some things may be harder for you to learn, but easier for your friend. Other things may be easier for you to learn. But all students learn many of the same things."

Mental-Retardation Illustration "There are some students who learn things more slowly than others. What is easy for most students their age is hard for them. They need more time and practice to learn things, and more help with learning them. These students are called *mentally retarded.*

"How many students have ever heard the words 'mentally retarded' before?"

Student Responses In some classes, several students may respond affirmatively. They may have been made aware of this term by an older sibling. If any of the students responds affirmatively, continue.

Instructor "What did you think the words 'mentally retarded' meant before I explained them?"

Student Responses

To some pupils, this term has negative connotations, such as

- Stupid.
- Bad.
- You shouldn't play with them.

Concluding Statement

" 'Mentally retarded' describes someone who needs more time and help to learn."

If anyone has expressed negative associations, add:

"It does *not* mean bad. It does *not* mean that someone can't learn. It means that it takes the person longer to learn.

"Tomorrow I'm going to tell you a story about some children who are mentally retarded."

LESSON 2

Theme	Some students learn more slowly than others.
Specific Objectives	• To help students understand what mental retardation is • To reduce negative feelings about the mentally retarded
Literature for Students	*Amy Can Learn!* (the flip book that accompanies this guide)

DISCUSSION GUIDE

Instructor Introduction

"Yesterday we talked about students who learn more slowly than most others. Today we're going to find out more about some children who learn slowly and who need more help to learn."

STORY TIME

Read *Amy Can Learn!* Encourage students' questions and comments. Make the concluding statement that Amy can do many things that other children can: She can read, do arithmetic, and do puzzles. But it took Amy longer to learn these things than it takes most other children.

If any of the pupils comments that the children with Down's Syndrome in the photographs look "funny" or "different," continue:

"Some mentally retarded people do look different in some ways, but that doesn't mean that they aren't nice."

DISCUSSION

Hold up p. 30 of the flip book and say:

"Here's a picture of Amy. What is she doing?"

Student Response	Dancing.
Instructor	"Who is that woman with her? What is that woman doing?"
Student Responses	• The dancing teacher. • She's teaching her.
Instructor	"Yes. Amy goes to dancing school. She's learning ballet. That's her teacher. She's showing Amy how to do a ballet movement. Amy is learning how to dance, but she needs more help from her teacher than the others taking lessons."

Hold up p. 31 of the flip book and say:

"Here's another picture of Amy. How does she look?"

Student Responses	• She's happy. • She's running.
Instructor	"Yes. Amy is smiling. She's happy because she's going to be with other children. Amy loves to play with other children. She feels very lonely when she doesn't have anyone to play with."

Hold up p. 11 of the flip book and say:

"Here are three children playing. Tell me about them."

Student Responses	• They're making music. • She's hitting the xylophone.
Instructor	"What could they be thinking about?"
Student Responses	• What song to play • How much fun they are having
Instructor	"Yes. They could be thinking about what song to play or how much fun they are having. They are friends.

They play together and have good times. Mentally retarded students can be good friends."

Concluding Statement

"Once you get to know a mentally retarded person, you might like him very much. Most mentally retarded people are just like other people, but it takes them longer to learn new things."

LESSON 3

Theme — Some students learn more slowly than others.

Specific Objectives
- To teach students helpful ways of interacting with others who are mentally retarded
- To increase students' willingness to interact positively with others who are mentally retarded.

Activities
- Problem-Solving
- Doing Things Together

PROBLEM-SOLVING

Instructor Introduction — "Suppose a mentally retarded student was going to be in this class. Let's say she's just like Amy, but she's your age. We'll call her Amy, too. Let's talk about how we could act so that Amy could be happy working and playing with us."

Present the following situations, and ask the students for suggestions:*

Situation 1 — "Suppose some of the students were playing Hide-and-Seek in the schoolyard, and Amy wanted to play. But Amy didn't know how to pick good places to hide and she would leave her feet sticking out, so she was always the first one to be found. What could someone do to help Amy hide better?"

Appropriate Student Response — One of the other students could show her some good hiding places and tell her to make sure her feet weren't sticking out of the hiding place.

Situation 2 — "Suppose the class was going for a walk. I told everyone to get in line with a partner, but Amy didn't have a partner. How would that make Amy feel?"

Appropriate Student Response
- Sad
- Lonely

*These three situations should be modified to fit the activities of a particular class.

"If you already had a partner, what could you do to help Amy feel better?"

Appropriate Student Repsonse	Ask you if it's all right to have Amy as a second partner.
Situation 3	"Suppose you were looking at [or reading] a book, and Amy wanted you to play house with her. She tried to make you close the book and go with her to the dress-up corner. What would you do?"
Appropriate Student Response	Do just what I would do if any other student acted this way. Tell Amy that I do not want to play house with her now, I want to look at books. She can look at books, too; or, she can play house with someone else or by herself.

DIRECT CONTACT WITH MENTALLY RETARDED STUDENTS

If there is a class for mildly (educable) retarded students in the school, you and the teacher should get together to explore possibilities for expanded contact between your pupils. These possibilities include joint activities for a few students from each class; visits by a few students from one class to the other; and finally, activities that the two classes as groups might enjoy together. For example, a few from each class might get together for a cooking or arts and crafts experience; the class for the retarded might be invited to a puppet show put on by a regular class; yard activities could be arranged so that the two classes could interact, with teachers encouraging joint activities.

If retarded students are integrated into regular classes, you should consider ways of encouraging and supporting positive interactions in naturally occurring situations.

However, even when mildly retarded pupils are integrated into regular classes, if there is a class for moderately retarded children in the school, the opportunity exists for reducing fear and rejection of these students through carefully planned contacts.

ACTIVITIES FOR MORE ADVANCED STUDENTS

1. Read and show the photographs in *Amy Can Learn!*

It shows mildly retarded children. Two of the children have Down's Syndrome.

Briefly introduce the story by telling the class they are going to learn about people who are mentally retarded. Ask your pupils whether they have heard those words before, and if so, what the term means. If the students respond with derogatory terms such as "dumb," "stupid," "retard," or "someone who can't learn," you may say: "That's not the way to think of those words. You are now going to learn about the mentally retarded. I want you to pay careful attention to what the story shows and says about mental retardation. When it is over, we will talk about the words 'mental retardation' again."

After the flip book has been read and shown, ask the students to tell you about Amy. Elicit responses about the things she *can* do (read, put together a puzzle, dance, help prepare a snack). Ask the students about how Amy's family responds to her—how her parents and brothers or sisters feel about her and interact with her. Ask your pupils to talk about how they think Amy's classmates feel about her and how they would feel about her if they had her for a classmate.

Turn the discussion back to the meaning of mental retardation, and have the students keep Amy in mind while redefining this term. You may want to make the statement that the term *mental retardation* is a kind of shortcut way of saying "someone who learns most things more slowly than other people his (or her) age, who needs more help to learn, and who may not be able to understand some of the very difficult ideas that some people are able to."

Make *Amy Can Learn!* available for individual reading.

2. Pupils may ask why people are mentally retarded or how they get this way.

You may respond that: "Some people are born with a condition that makes it harder for them to learn. Sometimes we aren't sure how people become mentally retarded."

Some resources to help you answer student questions are:

Facts on Mental Retardation. National Association for Retarded Citizens, Publication #10-4. Arlington, Tex.: 1974.

President's Committee on Mental Retardation, Washington, D.C. 20201. Free single copies of many excellent pamphlets and brochures are available, including:

MR 72, Islands of Excellence
(May also be obtained free from the National Association for Retarded Citizens)

MR 73, The Goal Is Freedom
(May also be obtained from the National Association for Retarded Citizens.)

3. Simulate what it is like to be mentally retarded.

Introduce a new process in arithmetic to your pupils in less than half the time it would normally require. (Select a process that will be introduced in the next grade.) Then give them a five-item quiz on it.

After they have completed the quiz, discuss how the pupils felt during this activity. Ask them also what you, the teacher, could have done to help them and make them feel better during this activity (simplify the task for them; make sure they had mastered all the skills needed to understand the task; spend more time teaching the new process; provide more individual help; give the students more time for practice before testing). Make the point that this is just the kind of help that mentally retarded students need, but they need more of it than other people.

Design another simulation by applying the idea illustrated above to reading or science. Ask your pupils if they can make up an appropriate simulated experience in one of these areas.

4. Make the following books of fiction available for individual reading:

Byers, B. *The Summer of the Swans. New York:* Scholastic Books, 1970. *The charming story of a girl's relationship with her younger mentally retarded brother.*

Christopher, M. *Long Shot for Paul.* Boston: Little, Brown, 1966. *A boy is determined to help his retarded brother gain friendship and athletic skills.*

Wrightson, P. *A Racehorse for Andy.* New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1968. *A retarded boy, his friends, and his reality.*

5. Talk about differences in the appearance of some mentally retarded people.

Make the point that most mentally retarded individuals look no

different from other people. However, you may want to study about Down's Syndrome with your pupils. Because it is the most common form of mental retardation that produces physical differences, many students have seen individuals with this disorder in their community, and they are often feared or shunned by children. An investigation of Down's Syndrome would serve to both counteract negative behavior that students observe in the community and clarify the effects that physiology can have on retardation. Down's Syndrome is also a good focus of study because its biomedical basis is known—the presence of forty-seven chromosomes rather than forty-six.

The discussion can begin with *Amy Can Learn!* which can be reread and reshown, with your pupils paying particular attention to the appearances of the children in the class with Down's Syndrome. The term *Down's Syndrome* can be introduced as a *"medical disorder that some people are born with that makes it harder for them to learn and makes them look slightly different in certain ways, but that does not make them any less friendly or fun to be with.* (Moreover, some students with Down's Syndrome do learn to do most of the things that other students do.)

The book *The World of Nigel Hunt: The Diary of a Mongoloid Youth* may be made available to good readers. (See p. 29 for more information.)

References for the teacher:

Pitt, D. *Your Down's Syndrome Child.* National Association for Retarded Citizens, Publication #10-22. Arlington, Tex.

Smith, D. W. and A. A. Wilson. *The Child with Down's Syndrome (Mongolism).* Philadelphia: Saunders, 1973. *Includes photographs of Down's Syndrome children at different ages.*

6. Do some problem-solving with your class.

How can they relate helpfully to the mentally retarded in selected situations? One example is given below. You and your pupils can make up additional examples and responses appropriate to your particular setting.

"Suppose that some of your neighborhood friends were going to start a game of Hide-and-Seek. A girl with Down's Syndrome who also lived on the block wanted to play, but the others didn't want her to because she didn't know how to hide well. She either picked a space that was too small for her, or left her feet sticking out, or

would come out before she was found. She was very unhappy at not being included in the game. What could someone do?" (Offer to let this girl hide with her so that she would gain experience in finding a good place, tucking her feet in, not coming out too soon, and so on.)

7. Plan some joint activities between your pupils and those in a class for the educable mentally retarded.

If there is such a class in your school, these activities might include:

- Joint activities involving selected students from both classes, such as cooking or simple arts and crafts projects.
- Activities conducted in the special classroom, with some students from the regular classroom participating.
- Activities in the regular classroom, with selected students from the special classroom participating. Those in the regular classroom who have had previous contacts with the special-class students might serve as "buddies" during these visits.
- Regular-class activities to which all the students in the special class are invited, such as a puppet show, dramatized story, or musical performance put on by the regular class for the special class.
- Some of the students may want to volunteer to be helpers in the special class. They might participate once a week in yard activities with the special class to help the students learn to jump rope or play ball. They might help the special-class students learn to play games, such as Lotto and Bingo, or perform other activities that are both enjoyable and important to their development.

SOME QUESTIONS STUDENTS MAY ASK ABOUT THE MENTALLY RETARDED

Q: Why can't he do things that other students (his age) do?

A: He learns more slowly.

A: He needs more help to learn.

A: He will learn most of the things that other students learn, but it will take him longer.

Q: Why?

A: His mind doesn't work as quickly as other students'.

Q: Why does he look that way? Why does he look so funny?

(Asked about mentally retarded individuals with physical anomalies, as in Down's Syndrome.)

A: He was born looking different in some ways.

Q: Why does he act like that? Why is he doing that?

A. Sometimes we may not understand why a mentally retarded person does certain things, but he is usually trying to learn to do something. He may try a little differently because he doesn't know how else to do it.

BASIC INFORMATION ABOUT LEARNING DISABILITIES

Learning disabilities is a relatively new category of handicap and one in need of further definition. The term was formulated to facilitate the provision of special services to students who exhibited serious learning problems, but who did not fit in any established categories.

The following definition of learning disabilities was suggested in 1968 by the National Advisory Committee on Handicapped Children, U.S. Office of Education:

> Children with specific learning disabilities exhibit a disorder in one or more of the basic psychological processes involved in understanding or in using spoken or written languages. These may be manifested in disorders of listening, thinking, talking, reading, writing, spelling or arithmetic. They include conditions which have been referred to as perceptual handicaps, brain injury, minimal brain dysfunction, dyslexia, developmental aphasia, etc. They do not include learning problems which are due primarily to visual, hearing, or motor handicaps, to mental retardation, emotional disturbance or to environmental disadvantage.

It is estimated that 2 to 7 percent of the population exhibits specific learning disabilities.* Many professionals believe that learning disabilities are symptoms of a neurological disorder. The most-hypothesized causes of this neurological disorder are infections, drugs, and other problems occurring during pregnancy and damage to the brain during the birth process.

A learning-disabled student doesn't fit our expectations about how children learn. His IQ may be average or above, and he may demonstrate superior understanding in selected subjects. At the same time, he may be unable to learn to read, write, or spell as well as most students two or three years younger than he is. It is this discrepancy in functioning that often causes parents and teachers to attribute the learning failures of such children to laziness and lack of motivation. Sometimes learning-disabled students *do* stop trying, but it is usually the end-result of a long period of unsuccessful effort.

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*"Association for Children wtih Learning Disabilities," *Exceptional Parent*, 3 (1973) 26–27.

There are many patterns of learning disabilities. Some students may have poor motor coordination: They are awkward using scissors or a pencil and find it difficult to catch a ball or learn to skip. Some may be easily distracted and seem to be in constant motion. Many may exhibit severe visual-perception difficulties and are unable to distinguish between letters and their mirror-images. Some have speech difficulties and stumble over words and reverse their order. Most learning-disabled students try the patience of their parents and teachers and often view themselves as failures.

The learning-disabled can be helped, but they need special help. They may need to be taught, in a directed manner, much of the social behavior other students learn through general exposure; they may need individualized remedial instruction in reading, writing, spelling, and other subjects; and they may need directed practice in motor activities. These needs for special instruction led to the formation and rapid expansion of the Association for Children with Learning Disabilities in the 1960s. This national association, started mainly by parents, is dedicated to the expansion of services for the learning-disabled and the education of parents, professionals, and the general public about the special needs of these students.

LEARNING EXPERIENCES

1. Simulation

What does it feel like to be learning-disabled?

Some learning-disabled individuals have learned to read painstakingly and with continual effort. Below is a passage from *Moby Dick* as it might look to a learning-disabled person. Read it quickly, and then explain the passage to a friend.

> It is thiug uot nucommouly happeuing to the whale-doats iu those swarmiug seas; th sharks at times aqqareutly following them iu the same qresciut way that vnltnres hover over the dauuers of marchiug regimeuts in the east. Bnt these were the first sharks that habdeeuodsrved by the Pepnob siuce the White Whale habdeeuflrst becrieb.*

*"On Being 17, Bright — and Unable to Read," *New York Times*, April 25, 1976, Section 12, p. 15.

How did you feel when you realized that the words you were reading didn't make sense?

Another common characteristic of the learning-disabled is their inadequate impulse control—they immediately respond to almost every stimulus. Their inability to ignore irrelevant stimuli accounts for their widely-observed distractability and hyperactivity.

In the company of two or three friends, react to every stimulus that enters your perceptual field for fifteen minutes. Do not screen out *any* sensations. Each time a new object or event intrudes, allow it to draw your attention away from what you had been doing.

At the end of the fifteen-minute period, describe your feelings about your own functioning. Ask your friends to describe how they felt about your behavior.

2. Reading

What is it like to have a learning disorder?

Oppenheimer, J. "All about Me," *Journal of Learning Disabilities*, Vol. 1 (1968), pp. 68-81. *Regarded as a classic, this article describes how an unrecognized perceptual impairment created problems that were attributed to emotional disturbance, malingering, and so forth.*

Brutten, M., S. O. Richardson, and C. Mangel. *Something's Wrong with My Child: A Parent's Book about Children with Learning Disabilities*. New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1973.

3. Observation

How do learning-disabled students act? How can they be helped to learn subject-matter and skills that have proved problematic for them?

If there is a class or a resource-room for learning-disabled students in your school, arrange to visit it. Pay attention to:

- General behavioral characteristics of the students.
- Instructional techniques used by the teacher.
- Students' interactions with the teacher.

4. Conference

Make an appointment to meet briefly with the teacher of the students you observed. If you had any questions about their behavior or the instructional techniques used, he or she may be able to answer them.

5. Resources

For information and literature, write to

Association for Children with Learning Disabilities
5225 Grace St.
Pittsburgh, Pa. 15236

(Enclose a stamped, self-addressed envelope.)

Many state affiliates of the Association for Children with Learning Disabilities (ACLD) publish and/or distribute literature about learning disabilities. A list of them may be obtained from the national office in Pittsburgh. Local and state ACLD centers may be able to suggest resource persons to address your class.

Learning Disabilities: Student Activities

BASIC CONCEPTS

- Most people are better at learning some kinds of tasks than others.
- Some people have special problems learning certain kinds of skills.
- A person who has special difficulties learning to read, write, spell, or do arithmetic, while understanding some other subjects very well, is said to have a specific learning disability.
- Students with learning disabilities sometimes have other kinds of problems, such as not being very good at running, skipping, or playing ball.
- Learning-disabled students often try very hard to learn to do the things that others their age can do.
- Learning-disabled students are often very good at some activities. They may know a lot about certain topics in science or social studies. They may be very good musicians. Some people with learning disabilities are good artists.

GOALS

- To increase understanding of learning disabilities.
- To increase students' awareness of the skills and abilities of learning-disabled individuals.
- To increase positive interactions between students with and without learning disabilities.

Note: To allow greater flexibility, the Student Activities for Learning Disabilities have not been organized into a series of discrete lessons. With the exception of Activity 1, the experiences in this section are for more advanced students. For general guidelines on the use of these activities, see pp. 9-10 in *AID: Overview*.

1. Make the book *He's My Brother* available for individual reading.

Lasker, J. *He's My Brother*. Chicago: Albert Whitman & Co., 1974.

Individual students can make a list of the behavior that is helpful and the behavior that is not helpful that occurs in this book.

Although this book is easy to read, it is included for more advanced students because the concepts it contains are more sophisticated than its reading level.

2. Show the filmstrip *A Walk in Another Pair of Shoes*.

Chesler, B. *A Walk in Another Pair of Shoes*. An eighteen-and-a-half-minute color filmstrip with synchronized audio-cassette tape, designed for both students and adults.

Briefly introduce it by telling your pupils that they are going to see a filmstrip about a boy who has difficulty learning to do certain kinds of things that most boys and girls can do, but who can do other things very well.

Show the filmstrip.

After the filmstrip has been shown, ask the students to tell you about Dean. (What kinds of things does he have trouble doing? What can he do very well? If Dean had been in your class before you saw this filmstrip, what would you have thought about him? How would you have *felt* about him?)

Write the term *learning disabilities* on the board. Ask your pupils to tell you what these words mean. ("Someone who has difficulty learning certain skills.") If there is a class or resource-room for learning-disabled students in your school, tell your pupils that this program is designed to give those who have learning problems the special help they need.

3. Explore the possible causes of learning disabilities with your pupils.

They will in all likelihood question you about the causes of learning disabilities. An appropriate initial response would be, "No one understands exactly who some students have learning disabilities; it may have something to do with the way the brain develops." Some resources helpful to teachers and students examining the nature and causes of learning disabilities are:

Learning Disabilities due to Minimal Brain Dysfunction. National Institute of Health, DHEW Publication No. (NIH) 73-154. Bethesda, Md.: 1973. *Basic information for the the adult.*

Gardner, R. A. *MBD: The Family Book about Minimal Brain Dysfunction.* New York: Jason Aronson, 1973. *Part I of this book is designed for parents, but it is also quite appropriate for regular-classroom teachers. Part II is designed for students who have been labeled brain-injured (or learning-disabled), but it is also suitable for other students.*

4. Simulate what it is like to be learning-disabled.

Some learning-disabled students apparently do not perceive differences between letters that are identical except for orientation, such as *b* and *d*. They also do not perceive directional differences between words, such as *saw* and *was*. The passage below includes several reversals of letters and words. It is written the way it might be perceived by some students with learning disabilities.

Ruff

I love my dog Ruff. He is a dig, reb Irish setter. I first was him in a pet winbow when he saw a puppy. What deautiful gob, I thought. I must get him. My dirthbay saw coming up. I talked my parents toin duying him for me. Was I happy when they drought him home for me !

Hand out individual copies of the passage above to the class. Give the students a few minutes to examine it. Explain that this is the way this story might look to a person with a learning disability, then ask for volunteers to read the passage out loud.

After two or three students have tried to read the passage individually, have the class work together to figure out what the passage is supposed to say.

Have them analyze the nature of the reversal errors.

Ask the students to discuss how they felt when they tried to read the passage written with letter and word reversals. Then ask them to describe what it must be like *always* to perceive written language this way.

5. Make the following books available for individual reading:

Sackmary, A., and R. Zeeman. *Special People.* New Jersey Association for Children with Learning Disabilities, No. 1000. Convent Station, N.J.: 1973. *Includes short sections on each of the impairments studied in this curriculum, including learning disabilities.*

MBD: The Family Book about Minimal Brain Dysfunction, Part II.
(See p. 30 for full reference.)

6. Invite a resource person to visit your class.

He might be an adult who has specific learning problems, but who is also a competent, interesting individual. He can talk about the learning and interpersonal problems he experienced in childhood and then discuss how he developed his current competence. If this person is engaged in work that can be shown to the students, it could be a valuable reinforcement.

Another possible resource person would be the parent of a learning-disabled child who is an active member of the Association for Children with Learning Disabilities. Many parents in ACLD chapters are quite experienced in community education, and they can speak about the difficulties of childhood for the learning-disabled and what others can do to make school and community life less stressful for a learning-disabled student. Contact your local ACLD chapter or the learning disabilities program in your school system for suggestions of resource people.

7. Do some problem-solving with your pupils.

How can they relate helpfully to learning-disabled students in selected situations? One example is given below. You and your pupils can make up additional examples appropriate for your particular setting.

"Suppose that a boy like Dean is in your class. Sometimes he gets very upset, and even cries, because he can't do something right. What can you do at such times?" (Don't respond by making fun of him—this will upset him more. Give him time to calm down. Dean may need the teacher's attention at such times, so act in such a way that allows the teacher to give him attention. If, at another time when he is not upset, Dean needs help with something he is trying to do, offer to do it with him.)

8. Plan some joint activities between a class for students with learning disabilities and your own.

If your school does not have such a class, plan some activities around a resource room. Many schools do not have special classes for the learning-disabled. Instead, they have a resource room to

which such students go for part-time, special help. A resource room can be a very interesting place, even for students with no particular learning difficulties.

One school took advantage of this fact to help reduce the teasing that took place when students went to the resource room. The pupil scheduled to go to the room for special help was allowed to select a classmate-friend to go with him each time. The attitudes of the other pupils changed considerably with this experience.* If there is a resource-room program for the learning-disabled in your school, you might explore the possibility of using some variation of this idea.

*B. Aiello, ed., *Making It Work: Practical Ideas for Integrating Exceptional Children into Regular Classes* (Reston, Va.: The Council for Exceptional Children, 1975).

CURRICULUM MATERIALS AND REFERENCES

MENTAL RETARDATION

Books

Byers, B. *The Summer of the Swans.* New York: Scholastic Books, 1970. *(Juvenile.)*

Christopher, M. *Long Shot for Paul.* Boston: Little, Brown, 1966. *(Juvenile.)*

Facts on Mental Retardation. National Association for Retarded Citizens, Publication #10-4. Arlington, Tex.: 1974.

Green, M. *Is It Hard? Is It Easy?* Reading, Mass.: Addison-Wesley, 1960. *(Juvenile.)*

Hunt, N. *The World of Nigel Hunt.* New York: Garrett, 1967. *(Juvenile.)*

Hurwitz, H. L. *Donald: The Man Who Remains a Boy.* New York: Pocket Books, 1973.

Lasker, J. *He's My Brother.* Chicago: Albert Whitman, 1974.

Smith, D. W., and A. A. Wilson. *The Child with Down's Syndrome (Mongolism).* Philadelphia: Saunders, 1973.

Wrightson, P. *A Racehorse for Andy.* New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1968. *(Juvenile.)*

Free Material

Pitt, D. *Your Down's Syndrome Child.* National Association for Retarded Citizens, Publication #10-22. Arlington, Tex. (Single copies free.)

President's Committee on Mental Retardation. *MR72, Islands of Excellence.* Department of Health, Education and Welfare, DHEW Publication No. (OS) 73-7. Washington, D.C.: 1973. (Free single copies may be obtained from the President's Committee on Mental Retardation, Washington, D.C. 20201, or the National Association for Retarded Citizens.)

President's Committee on Mental Retardation. *MR73, The Goal Is Freedom.* DHEW Publication No. (OHD) 74-21001. Washington, D.C.: 1974. (Free single copies are available from the President's Committee on Mental Retardation or the National Association for Retarded Citizens.)

LEARNING DISABILITIES

Books and Articles

Brutten, M., S. O. Richardson, and C. Mangelo. *Something's Wrong with My Child: A Parent's Book about Children with Learning Disabilities.* New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1973.

Gardner, R. A. *MBD: The Family Book about Minimal Brain Dysfunction.* New York: Jason Aronson, 1973.

"On Being Seventeen, Bright and Unable to Read." *New York Times,* April 25, 1976, p. 15.

Oppenheimer, J. "All about Me." *Journal of Learning Disabilities,* Vol. 1 (1968), pp. 68-81.

Sackmary, A., and R. Zeeman. *Special People.* New Jersey Association for Children with Learning Disabilities, No. 1000. Convent Station, N.J.: 1973.

Filmstrip

Chesler, B. *A Walk in Another Pair of Shoes.* Los Angeles, Calif.: California Association for Neurologically Handicapped Children, 1972. *An eighteen-and-a-half-minute color filmstrip with synchronized audio-cassette tape.*

Free Material

Learning Disabilities due to Minimal Brain Dysfunction. National Institute of Health, DHEW Publication No. (NIH) 73-154. Bethesda, Md.: 1973. (Free single copies are available from the National Institute of Neurological Diseases, Communicative Disorders and Strokes, National Institute of Health, Building 31, Room 8A-0B, Bethesda, Md. 20014.)

Amy Can Learn!

EC162488

Amy Can Learn!

reprinted by

The University of the State of New York
THE STATE EDUCATION DEPARTMENT
Office for Education of Children with Handicapping Conditions
Albany, New York 12234
September 1982

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Developmental Learning Materials
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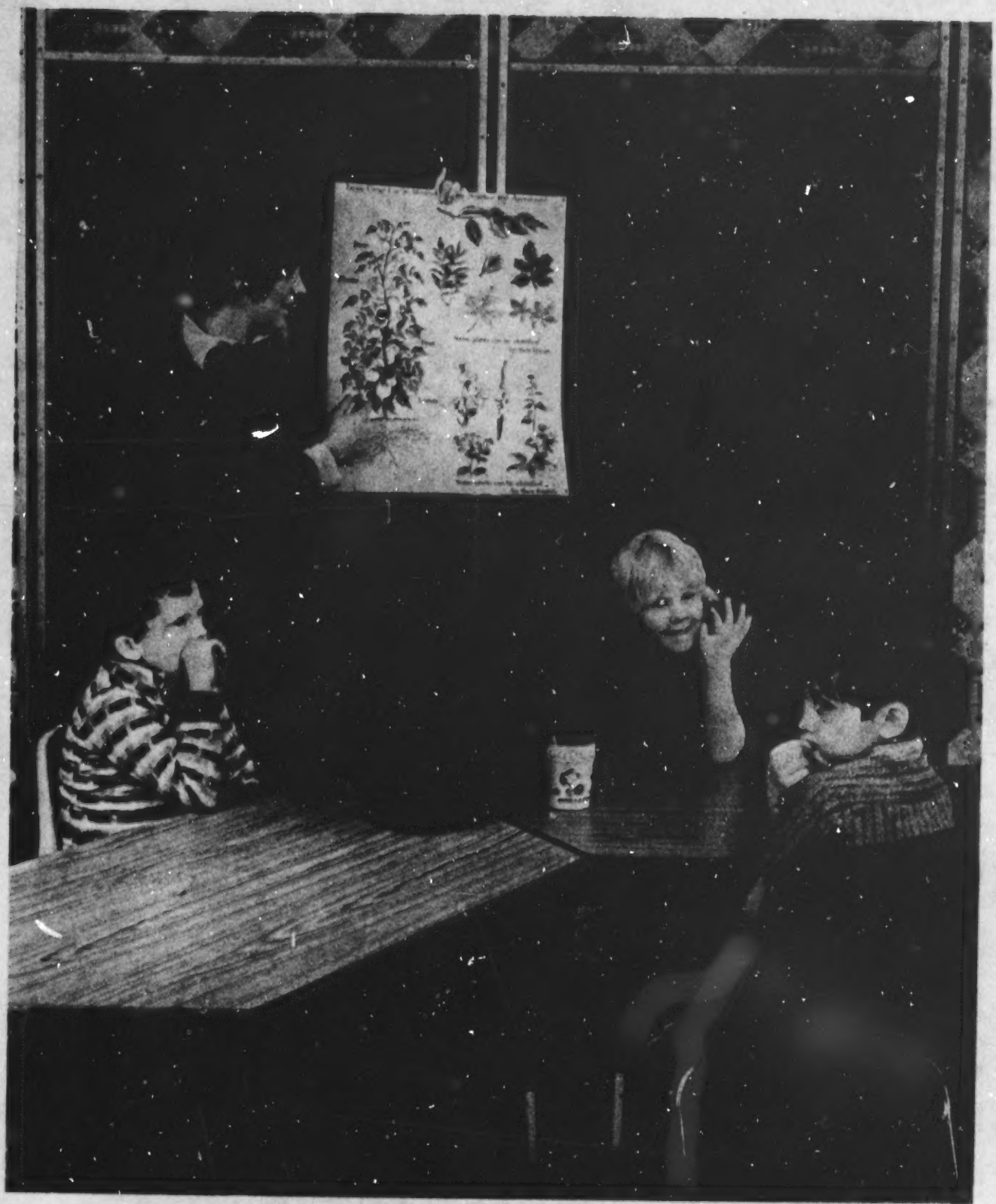
82-7299

This book was produced in cooperation with the Exceptional Child Center, Utah State University, Dr. Marvin Fifield, Director.



Some things are hard to understand. If your teacher showed you this chart and explained it with words like *osmosis* and *absorption* of nutrients, you probably wouldn't know what she meant.

1

You might understand if your teacher said, "Plants breathe through openings in their leaves and take in water through their roots."

You would probably understand the teacher if she used those words, but there are some children your age who could not understand this explanation. The teacher would have to show them a real plant and use simpler words to tell them about it.

Children who need things made easier for them, who need more time and extra help to learn, are called *mentally retarded.*

Sometimes children who are mentally retarded look the same as other children . . .

. . . and sometimes they look different in some ways.

Mentally retarded children have feelings, just like you.

45

Sometimes they're happy.

Sometimes they're sad.

10 Sometimes they're worried.

Mentally retarded children like to play, just like other children.

They can be good friends to other children. 49

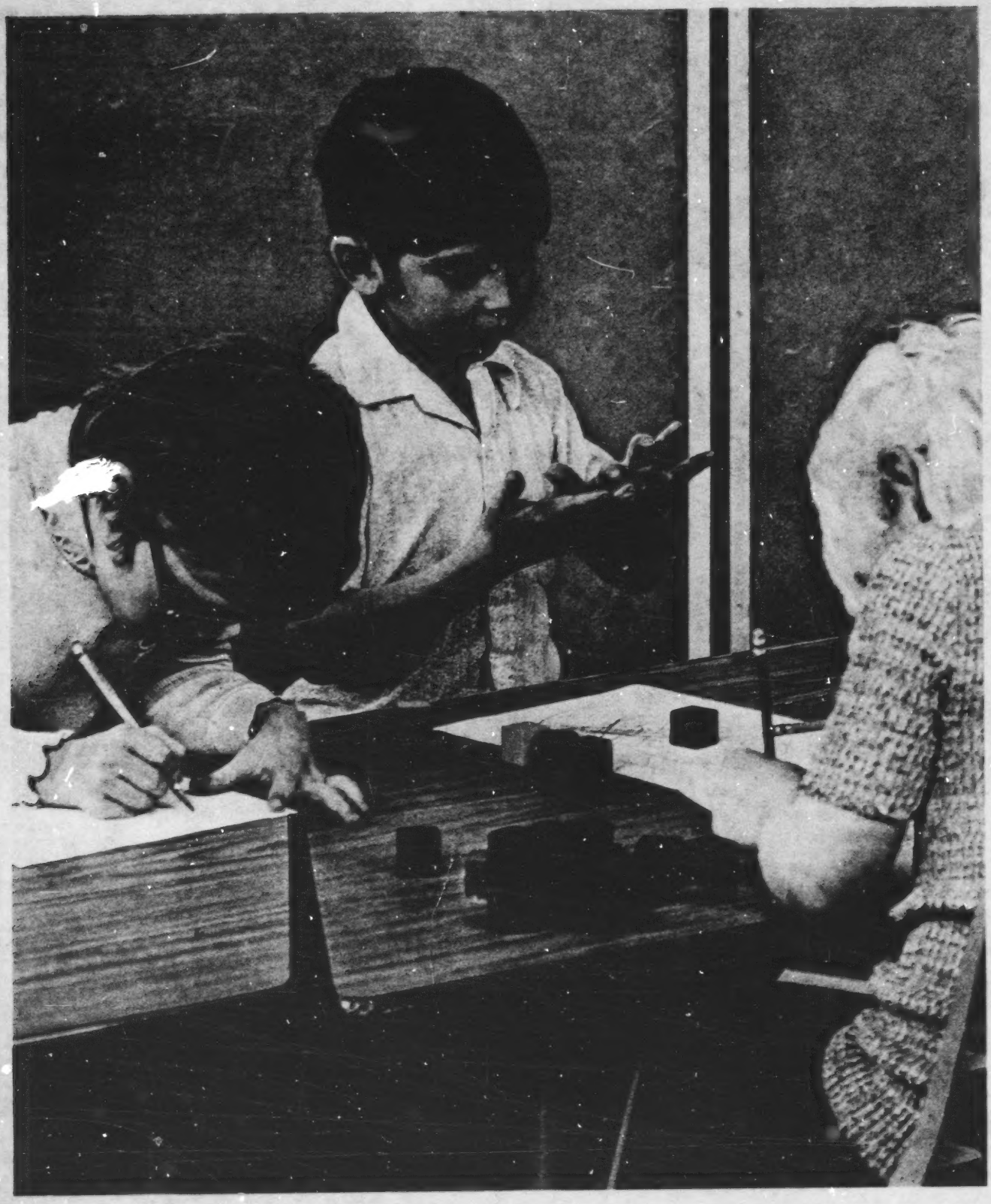
C LORS

C LC

This is Amy. She is nine years old. Amy is mentally retarded.

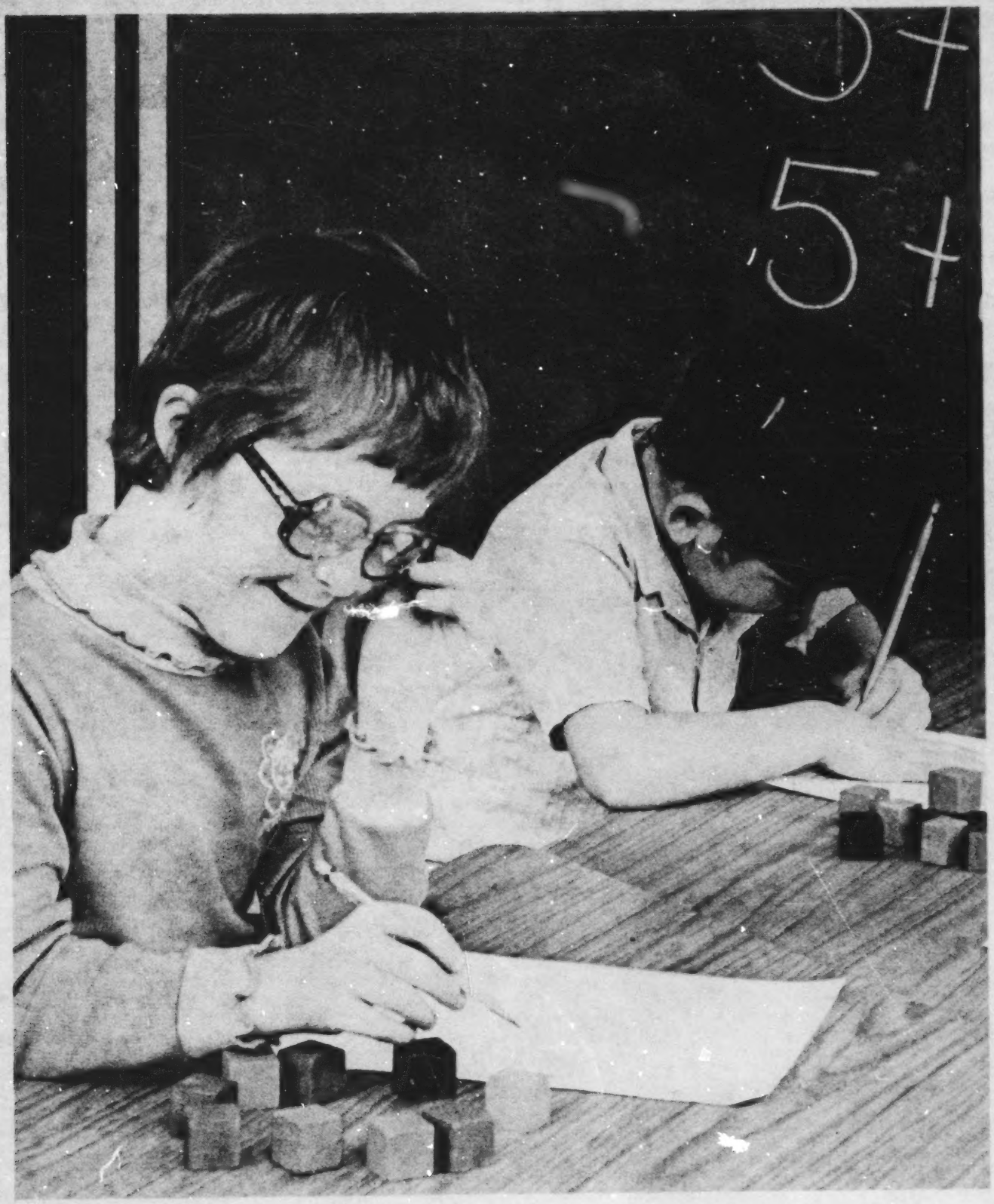
The other children in Amy's class are younger then she is. They are not mentally retarded, but Amy and her classmates are the same in many ways.

It's arithmetic time. Sometimes Amy uses her fingers to help her count .



So do some of her classmates.

"Can that really be the answer?" Amy thinks to herself.



That was hard work!

57

Now it's time for quiet games. Amy gets a puzzle.

She figures out where the pieces go.

The teacher calls for the children's attention.

24 "What is today's date?" she asks

"Friday, December 17th," says Amy. She puts up the sign.

Amy's getting to be a good reader. She works hard at it. She tries to figure out the answers to questions about the story.

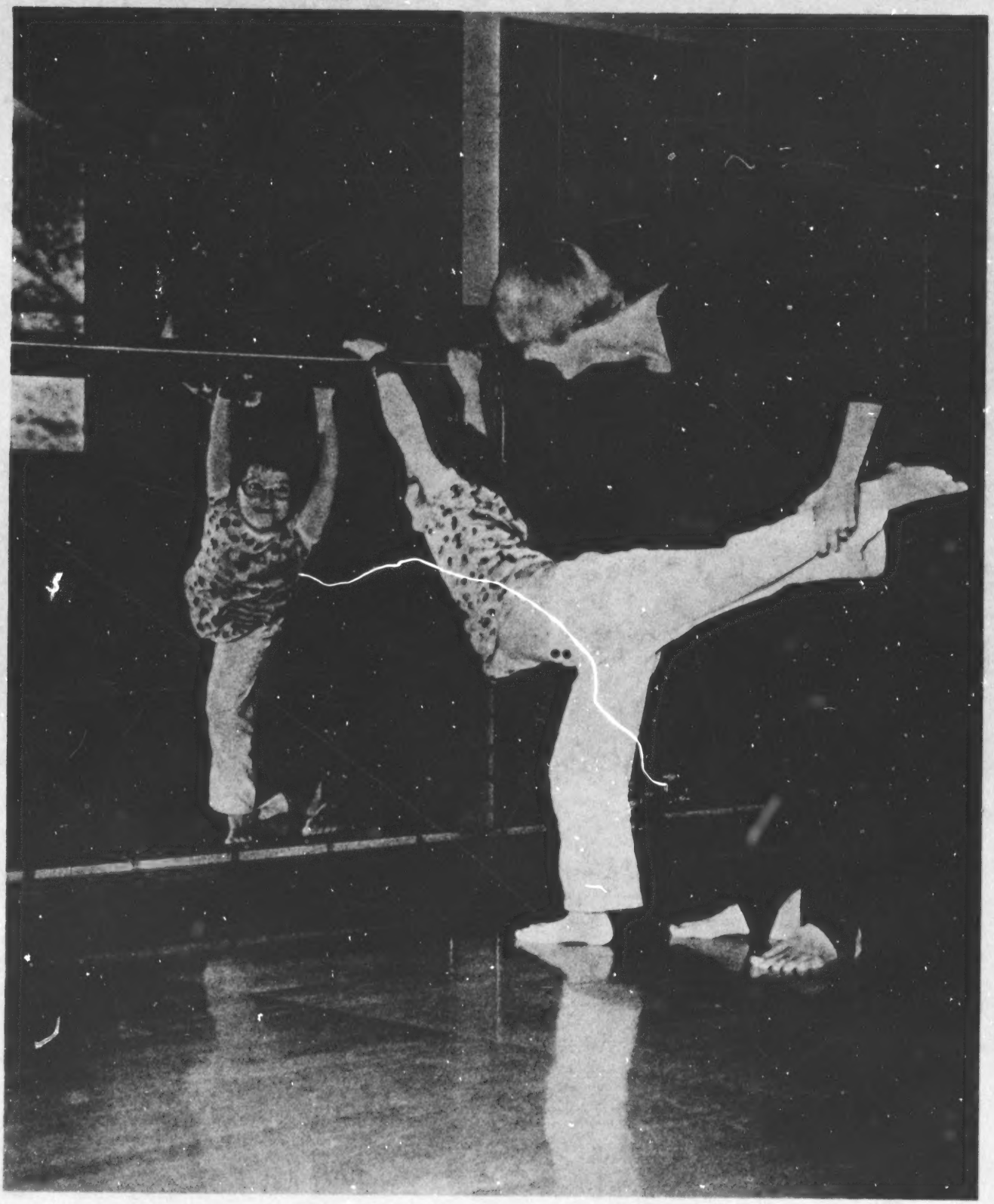
Amy is happy because she is learning to do what other children can do.

65

After school, there's time for many other things, like helping her mother in the kitchen . . .

. . . or having fun at a playground . . .

66



67

. . . or learning to dance.

68

Amy likes to do many of the same things you do.